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E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/11/2016
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RIGA WITH DUTCH

Classified By: Ambassador Roland Arnall, reasons 1.4 (b,d)

11. (C) Summary: During her September 8 visit to The Hague, U.S. Permanent Representative to NATO Victoria Nuland discussed the road to Riga with FM Ben Bot, Dutch officials, parliamentarians and journalists. Nuland framed discussion with three top summit goals: 1) progress in Afghanistan; 2) a constructive heads of state dinner; and 3) the global partnership initiative. Dutch interlocutors agreed with the need to demonstrate progress in Afghanistan, and offered to work with NATO SYG Jaap de Hoop Scheffer and other Allies to choreograph the heads of state dinner. Dutch officials support the global partnership initiative, but have some reservations with the explicit use of the word global and cautioned against moving too fast. End summary.

Meeting with FM Bot

¶2. (C) Nuland broadly covered U.S. goals for the Riga summit with FM Bot. She said the USG views Riga as an opportunity to make the case for a global, open NATO for the 21st century while demonstrably closing the doors on the NATO of the Cold War past. She argued that NATO's role in Afghanistan would determine the strategic backdrop for the summit, and commended the Dutch for their deployment to Uruzgan and ink splot strategy linking population centers in the province by development and infrastructure projects. On the day of the Heads' Meeting, the quality of discussion at the summit dinner would be determinative in terms of Heads' attitudes toward NATO; this requires working closely with NATO SYG de Hoop Scheffer to script and set the tone for dinner.

¶3. (C) Bot was very supportive of ensuring a meaningful dinner dialogue. Alluding to countervailing forces at NATO, he said he would encourage his French colleague at the upcoming EU Foreign Ministers meeting to be more constructive. He described the French position -- strengthen the EU, weaken NATO -- as consistent in recent years. Nuland said European nations should push French President Chirac; too much U.S. pressure could be counterproductive. Bot offered GONL assistance in that regard.

¶4. (C) On enlargement, Bot said events in Ukraine suggest its membership aspirations are moving in the wrong direction. Nuland noted that NATO's open door policy requires candidate countries to want membership, which was not exactly clear in Ukraine at the moment. This does not mean, however, that NATO should give up on Ukraine -- Russia was working behind the scenes to foil closer NATO-Ukraine ties, she said; Bot concurred.

¶5. (C) On the global partnership initiative, Amb. Nuland stressed the need to come as close to a consensus as possible at the foreign ministerial in New York. She anticipated French opposition, but that should not prevent all other Allies from sending a strong signal. Bot supported the initiative, but had some reservations regarding the use of the word global. Noting problems with EU expansion, he cautioned that NATO could be weakened by growing too quickly. Nuland stressed that the initiative was not looking to create a 26 100 structure with countries around the world, but rather strong 26 1 ties with more countries, and then mixing and matching in a 26 N format based on commitment to common action.

Meeting with Dutch Interagency

¶6. (U) Nuland had more in-depth consultations with members of the Dutch interagency, including MFA Director General for Political Affairs Pieter de Gooijer, MOD Director for General Policy Affairs Lo Casteleijn, Dutch Permanent Representative to NATO Herman Schaper, Principal Foreign Affairs Advisor to the Prime Minister Karel Oosterom, and MOD Chief of Operations Gen. Eikelboom.

¶7. (C) De Gooijer described current Allied positions in Brussels as obstructionist, potentially leading to a negative summit in Riga. A more optimistic Amb. Nuland said the summit presents an opportunity for NATO to demonstrate that it had taken on global responsibilities, capabilities, and partners. She outlined three make or break objectives: 1)

progress in Afghanistan by the summit; 2) constructive and meaningful dialogue during the summit heads of state dinner; and 3) an alliance strong, open, and flexible enough to work with current and new partners through the global partnership initiative.

¶8. (C) On Afghanistan, Casteleijn identified three urgent priorities: 1) force generation issues, as illustrated by SACEUR's request for an additional battalion; 2) the transition to ISAF IV; and 3) improving ISAF security and reconstruction integration. Nuland noted French

intransigence with regard to using the Strategic Reserve Force or the NATO Response Force (NRF) should the alliance fail to generate an additional battalion. She suggested the seven Allies contributing in the south pressure those not contributing, and push the French hard at the North Atlantic Council (NAC). De Gooijer cautioned against a showdown; instead, Allies should appeal to France's political responsibilities -- it needs to be a victory for Chirac, he said. Amb. Nuland agreed to work together closely to turn the French around.

¶9. (C) De Gooijer expressed frustration with Karzai; Amb. Nuland commended the Dutch for holding Karzai's feet to the fire on changing the Uruzgan governor before they deploy, noting that sometimes Karzai needs this kind of pressure to focus. She also complimented the well-balanced Dutch ink splot strategy, and described the Dutch approach with the Afghan National Army and Police as a model for other Allies to follow. Longer term, she suggested the Alliance think about re-balancing the reconstruction work load.

¶10. (C) De Gooijer agreed the Alliance must demonstrate real progress in Afghanistan prior to the summit, including the integration of security and reconstruction efforts. He stressed the need to learn from the situation on the ground, and to present these lessons to the public in order to temper expectations. Amb. Nuland concurred, noting that Afghanistan is a long-term effort for NATO. She recommended NATO senior civilian representative Dan Everts organize an Allied ambassadorial group in Kabul.

¶11. (C) De Gooijer agreed that the heads of state dinner needed to be a constructive, meeting of the minds with a sense of commonality and purpose. This requires choreography -- any participant could potentially ruin the dinner by saying the wrong thing during opening statements, he said. De Gooijer offered Dutch assistance in working with other Allies and NATO SYG de Hoop Scheffer to ensure the dinner is scripted. That said, de Gooijer suggested the conversation also address where NATO is heading in upcoming summits. Going global might initiate a fight among Allies -- better to explain how NATO is a global organization rather than stating it explicitly, he said.

¶12. (C) On the global partnership initiative, Nuland pointed to the importance of getting as close as possible to consensus on a general framework for the initiative at the New York foreign ministerial. The initiative should make available a single-box of tools from which partners can choose, and create flexibility for Allies to meet with interested partners at a 26 N format based on themes. This will also help identify advanced partners and give them more, if they want it.

Meeting with MOD

¶13. (C) In a separate meeting, Amb. Nuland and Casteleijn assessed the current situation in southern Afghanistan. Casteleijn said he would call his Norwegian counterpart prior to the upcoming NATO CHOD's meeting to encourage a Norwegian contribution in response to SACEUR's request for an additional battalion in the south. They also discussed the unlikelihood that France and Germany would support the use of the NRF in Afghanistan should NATO fail to generate a battalion. Amb. Schaper repeated earlier points that the best strategy in gaining French support should be to allow them to be the heroes, instead of jamming them publicly.

¶14. (C) Casteleijn inquired if it made sense for NATO to pursue an approach similar to the USG's Commander Emergency Reconstruction Program (CERP). Nuland suggested the NATO bureaucracy might make such an approach difficult, and added

the Canadians are already doing something similar to the CERP while the Brits are considering it. Casteleijn suggested the idea be discussed further at NATO to better coordinate reconstruction efforts. Nuland said the UN and EU should

also be challenged to do more in terms of reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan.

¶15. (C) Moving on to Riga, Amb. Nuland referred to SACEUR's plea for more NRF contributions -- especially logistics support -- to achieve full operational capability (FOC) by October 1. She stated the gaps in logistics was the main impediment to reaching FOC.

¶16. (C) Amb. Nuland thanked the Dutch for their difficult decision during a caretaker government to purchase 500 hours for 2007 in the Strategic Airlift Initiative (SAI). Casteleijn was optimistic that the GONL will decide to purchase additional hours, but would have to wait until after the parliamentary elections in November. He said the Dutch require more hours than they had initially signed up for. Amb. Nuland said post-Riga, the Alliance should look at common-funding for aspects of the initiative.

¶17. (C) Amb. Schaper and Casteleijn asked for USG expectations regarding the NATO Special Operations Forces (SOF) initiative. Amb. Nuland suggested the Alliance begin with a coordination cell staffed with 40-60 personnel by a framework nation, and accompanied by 2-3 personnel by interested Allies. She hoped the framework nation would be announced at the upcoming informal defense ministerial in Podoroz, and said the coordination cell could be unveiled at Riga. Casteleijn commended the SOF model, noting situational awareness and training benefits.

Meeting with Parliamentarians

¶18. (U) During a lunch hosted by Amb. Arnall, Amb. Nuland and Amb. Schaper related their recent trip to Afghanistan to Dutch parliamentarians. In attendance were current and former party members of the collapsed coalition, as well as from the main opposition Labor Party (PvdA). Nuland commended the Dutch deployment to Uruzgan, noting that she was very impressed by how the Dutch have linked security and development efforts through their ink splot strategy. She praised Dutch soldiers for their willingness to fight, and said Parliament should continue to support its troops.

¶19. (U) In a spirited discussion, parliamentarians posed a number of questions and comments, including plans for the transition from ISAF III to IV, efforts to get Allies not contributing in Afghanistan to do more, SACEUR's call for more troops, the ISAF detention policy, criticism of the Karzai government, the porous border with Pakistan, poppy eradication efforts vs. alternatives, reconstruction efforts and the inability for NGOs to work in the region.

¶20. (U) Nuland acknowledged the fight against the Taliban was difficult, as many of the enemy combatants killed thus far have been poor farmers while hard-line Taliban operatives remain across the Pakistan border. She argued that Afghanistan is at a tipping point with the Afghan people as to whether the Afghan government can provide them security. She praised the GONL's strategy with Karzai, and pressed the Dutch to push the UN and EU to do more in Afghanistan, especially with regard to reconstruction efforts.

¶21. (U) Amb. Nuland has cleared on this cable.
ARNALL